

Recent Research Progress on a Study of the Sea Name on East Sea and Japan Sea in China

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Within last 7 years, research progress in China on a study of the sea name on East Sea and Japan Sea goes much actively than before under the unremitting efforts of the Society for East Sea, Republic of Korea, for promoting academic research in this field. Chinese scholars issued 12 papers in some international seminars on the geography name of 'East Sea' during last 7 years and 11 of them are about the name of East Sea. Generally, those papers indicate that the renaming or standardization of the Sea of Japan should be discussed deeply not only in academic field but also in international law for practice. This article summarized some trends of research of Chinese scholars on the naming of the sea area without personal comment.

1. Why the name of Sea of Japan should be standardized?

- 1) Since the World War II, the standardization problems of geographical names have been taken more and more seriously in international society,¹ and newly independent countries showed strong desire for participating international affairs;²
- 2) Coastal countries of Sea of Japan think that marine resources are important to their own development;³
- 3) The name of Japan Sea is inappropriate to peripheral countries' interests because the sea area is not internal sea of Japan, which would cause unfriendly multinational cooperation between the littoral countries;⁴
- 4) Littoral countries emphasize on administering the sea area by law;⁵ and
- 5) The imperialists of Japan aggressed against many Asia countries, particularly China for many times and colonized Korea Peninsula over decades, resulting in serious hurt in the mind of the people of those countries.⁶ Emotionally peoples of those countries are hard to have a common agreement for the use of the name of Sea of Japan.

2. How the name of East Sea evolved? (see table 1)

¹ Yang Ningyi, *Problems on Origin and Standardization of Name of 'Japan Sea'*, The International Seminar on the Standardization of Geographical Names: Special Emphasis Concerning the 'East Sea', pp. 18-19, 1997 Seoul.

² Yuan Shuren and Huang Yanjun, *Our Opinion on the Geographical Name of the Sea of Japan (East Sea)*, The International Workshop on the Geographical Name of 'East Sea', p.39, 1996 Seoul.

³ *idem*

⁴ Zhu Shiguang, *Changes in Naming the Sea of Japan during Late-Qing Dynasty Period-A Survey of Chinese historical Documents*, The International Seminar on the Standardization of Geographical Names: Special Emphasis Concerning the 'East Sea', p. 60, 1997 Seoul

⁵ Yuan Shuren and Huang Yanjun, *Our Opinion on the Geographical Name of the Sea of Japan (East Sea)*, The International Workshop on the Geographical Name of 'East Sea', p.40, 1996 Seoul.

⁶ Sun Donghu, *The Background and Significance of Renaming the Sea of Japan by Chinese Academia in 1940s*, The Fifth International seminar on the Naming of Seas: Special Emphasis Concerning the East Sea, p. 86-88, 1999 Seoul.

- 1) The eldest Chinese geographic literature, *The Classic of Mountains and Rivers* (山海經), related to the name of “East Sea of Korea” twice, that means the name for the sea area had been fixed down 2,200 years ago;⁷
- 2) Since Tang Dynasty the Sea of Japan had different names with different times in Chinese historic literatures. The name of Sea of Japan had been lasting only for 110 years around;⁸
- 3) The name of East Sea was lasted from Warring States (480-222BC) to Qing Dynasty (1616-1911AD) without any discontinuity;⁹ and
- 4) The first special name for the eastern sea of Korea in Chinese ancient work is Donghai, and it is the only name that is used to dominate the whole region until the later stage of Qing Dynasty.¹⁰

3. Where does the name of the Sea of Japan come from?

- 1) Matteo Ricci, a missionary from Europe, published his map *World Map* in 1602, in which the sea area was named Sea of Japan first. However the name had not been spread much in Europe and Japan. On the other hand, the name of Sea of Korea was used much more than the name of Sea of Japan in old European maps published within 1624-1826. Even in the maps published in Japan, the name of Sea of Japan had not been used much before the middle of 19th century;¹¹
- 2) The name of Sea of Japan was brought into China and Japan by westerners, but who is the first borrower need to be ratified further;¹² and
- 3) The term of Japan Sea appeared initially in the official document in China was not in China its own document, but in the ‘Portsmouth Treaty’ concluded by Japan and Russia (September 1905), which was the result of war between those two countries. So the usage of name of Japan Sea and its spreading in other countries is abnormal.¹³

4. Why Chinese scholars tried to rename the Sea of Japan in 1940’s

- 1) The Japanese aggression to China is direct cause of triggering off this process.¹⁴

⁷ Gu Renhe, *Eastern Sea Area of Korea Peninsula should Resume the Original Name: Donghai, Orient Sea*, The Seventh International Seminar on the Naming of Seas: Special Emphasis concerning the East Sea, p.75, 2001 Seoul.

⁸ Wu Songdi, *The Geographical Name for the Sea of Japan in Chinese Historical Documents*, The International Seminar on the Geographical Name of ‘East Sea’, p. 18, 1995 Seoul.

⁹ Gu Renhe, *Eastern Sea Area of Korea Peninsula should Resume the Original Name: Donghai, Orient Sea*, The Seventh International Seminar on the Naming of Seas: Special Emphasis concerning the East Sea, p.76, 2001 Seoul.

¹⁰ Han Maoli, *Name for the Eastern Sea of Korea Peninsula, by Chinese Ancient Works*, The Fifth International Seminar on the naming of Seas: Special Emphasis Concerning the East sea, p.13, 1999 Seoul.

¹¹ Wu Songdi, *The geographical Name for the East Sea (Sea of Japan) in Old European and Japanese Maps*, The International Seminar on the Naming of Seas: Special Emphasis Concerning the East Sea, pp. 62-68, 1998 Seoul.

¹² Yang Ningyi, *Problems on Origin and Standardization of Name of ‘Japan Sea’*, The International Seminar on the Standardization of Geographical Names: Special Emphasis Concerning the ‘East Sea’, pp. 18-19, 1997 Seoul.

¹³ Zhu Shiguang, *Changes in Naming the Sea of Japan during Late-Qing Dynaty Period-A Survey of Chinese historical Documents*, The International Seminar on the Standardization of Geographical Names: Special Emphasis Concerning the ‘East Sea’, p. 55, 1997 Seoul

¹⁴ Sun Donghu, *The Background and Significance of Renaming the Sea of Japan by Chinese Academia in 1940s*, The Fifth

- 2) From the late 19th century, Japan had a policy of ‘external extension’, and “The Sino-Japanese War of 1894-1895” and the Aggression War of 1931-1945 is a concrete measure for internalization of the sea;¹⁵
- 3) Sea of Japan is a result of power politics in the background of the imperialism and colonialism expanding from the mid-1800s. It ignored the basic justice that should be maintained in the international world, and infringed upon the circumjacent countries’ right of naming in the international sea area, such as Korea and China;¹⁶ and
- 4) Although the name of the Sea of Japan does not mean that this sea area belong to Japan, it can not yet clear off its trace of external extension. This is the main reason of renaming it by Chinese academia in 1940s.¹⁷

5. What are the principles for standardization of the sea name?

- 1) Traditional way of naming in history lasted for several centuries and the costumed way of naming in neighbor countries should be well considered;¹⁸
- 2) The effect of the standardization should be enabling to promote friendship and to give impetus to exchange of politics, economics and culture between the countries concerned;¹⁹
- 3) Historical fact should be considered. The peripheral countries, China, Korea and Russia respectively have a long and civilized history, and once upon a time the sea was named as ‘Bohai’, later Bohai became a kingdom’s name. So it should have a name multilateral acceptable.²⁰ The name of the Japan Sea was used commonly under the given historical background. It was at that time when west colonialism move into East Asia, Japan became an important country around the Japan Sea, but China and Korea gradually annexed, lost speaking-right in international politics;²¹ and
- 4) Geographical features should be taken into consideration in the discussion of this problem towards the normalization of the name of the waters,²² and avoiding repetition of the names used by neighboring oceanic areas.

International seminar on the Naming of Seas: Special Emphasis Concerning the East Sea, p. 86-88, 1999 Seoul.

¹⁵ *idim*

¹⁶ Gu Renhe, *Eastern Sea Area of Korea Peninsula should Resume the Original Name: Donghai, Orient Sea*, The Seventh International Seminar on the Naming of Seas: Special Emphasis concerning the East Sea, p.98, 2001 Seoul.

¹⁷ Sun Donghu, *The Background and Significance of Renaming the Sea of Japan by Chinese Academia in 1940s*, The Fifth International seminar on the Naming of Seas: Special Emphasis Concerning the East Sea, pp. 86-88, 1999 Seoul.

¹⁸ Du Xiangming, *Preliminary Study on the Name of Sea of Japan*, The International Workshop on the Geographical Name of ‘East Sea’, p. 5, 1996 Seoul

¹⁹ Yang Ningyi, *Problems on Origin and Standardization of Name of ‘Japan Sea’*, The International Seminar on the Standardization of Geographical Names: Special Emphasis Concerning the ‘East Sea’, pp. 18-19, 1997 Seoul.

²⁰ Zhu Shiguang, *Changes in Naming the Sea of Japan during Late-Qing Dynasty Period-A Survey of Chinese historical Documents*, The International Seminar on the Standardization of Geographical Names: Special Emphasis Concerning the ‘East Sea’, p. 55, 1997 Seoul

²¹ Yang Ningyi, *Problems on Origin and Standardization of Name of ‘Japan Sea’*, The International Seminar on the Standardization of Geographical Names: Special Emphasis Concerning the ‘East Sea’, pp. 18-19, 1997 Seoul.

²² *idim*

6. What the name of the sea should be?

- 1) According to historic tradition and the principle of naming a place (or a region) Donghai(東海) should be the right name for the sea area;²³
- 2) ‘Sea of Japan’ should be abolished, and the name of ‘The Orient Sea’ should be used because of being easy to get international acceptance far and wide;²⁴
- 3) It is significant that the name of ‘Sea of Japan’ and ‘East Sea’ are respectively employed in Fishery Entente between Japan and Korea.²⁵ It can be seen as a prelude of the standardization of the sea name; and
- 4) The word Donghai (東海) in Chinese Traditional vocabulary, embodies abundant senses of broadness, generousness, happiness and selflessness. So the word Donghai (東海) should be regained.²⁶

7. How difficult to standardize the name of the sea?

- 1) The rename of Sea of Japan will encounter great difficulties, especially when the name is widely recognized by the most countries in the world;²⁷ and
- 2) It is impossible to count on Japanese government agreeing to rename ‘Sea of Japan’ into any other name at this moment, and it is necessary to assess renaming difficulty because this name has long time international application.²⁸

8. What we should expect?

- 1) Taking future in view, negotiating for good neighbor and friendship, good collaboration between those countries related to this problem.
- 2) At present, guided by the convention of U.N. geographical name standardization, the short-term goal of trying for the bi-noted of international adoption should come it.²⁹

Table 1 **The Views of Chinese Scholars on Name of Sea of Japan**

²³ Han Maoli, *Name for the Eastern Sea of Korea Peninsula, by Chinese Ancient Works*, The Fifth International Seminar on the naming of Seas: Special Emphasis Concerning the East sea, p.19, 1999 Seoul.

²⁴ Gu Renhe, *Eastern Sea Area of Korea Peninsula should Resume the Original Name: Donghai, Orient Sea*, The Seventh International Seminar on the Naming of Seas: Special Emphasis concerning the East Sea, p.98, 2001 Seoul.

²⁵ Sun Donghu, *The Background and Significance of Renaming the Sea of Japan by Chinese Academia in 1940s*, The Fifth International seminar on the Naming of Seas: Special Emphasis Concerning the East Sea, pp. 86-88, 1999 Seoul.

²⁶ Gu Renhe, *Eastern Sea Area of Korea Peninsula should Resume the Original Name: Donghai, Orient Sea*, The Seventh International Seminar on the Naming of Seas: Special Emphasis concerning the East Sea, p.74, 2001 Seoul.

²⁷ Du Xiangming, *Preliminary Study on the Name of Sea of Japan*, The International Workshop on the Geographical Name of ‘East Sea’, p.5, 1996 Seoul

²⁸ Sun Donghu, *The Background and Significance of Renaming the Sea of Japan by Chinese Academia in 1940s*, The Fifth International seminar on the Naming of Seas: Special Emphasis Concerning the East Sea, pp. 86-88, 1999 Seoul.

²⁹ *idim*

Name of the Sea	Period	Author	Remarks
East Sea	B.C 480-222 Warring States	Gu Renhe, 2001	Eldest records
East Sea	206B.C-220A.D Eastern Han Dynasty		
Sea or ocean	Before Tang Dynasty	Wu Songdi, 1995 Chen Cai etc. 1995 Xi Guojin, 1995 Du Xiangming, 1996 Yuan Shuren etc.1996 Zhu Shiguang, 1997 Wu Songdi, 1998 Han Maoli, 1999 Gu Renhe, 2001	Initially recorded the name of the sea
East Sea	A.D 916-1126 Liao and Northern Song Dynasty		
Whale Sea	A.D 1271-1644 Yuan and Ming Dynasty		Officially appeared in Portsmouth Treaty
Different names with different part of the sea Sea of Japan	A.D 1644-1860 'East Sea', 'Southern Sea', 'Northern Sea' A.D 1864-1910 At the end of the Qing Dynasty, the Sea of Japan appeared in Chinese literatures		
Sea of Japan	A.D 1910-1949		
Sea of Japan	Since 1949 P.R of China		

Table 2 The List of Papers on the Sea of Japan (East Sea) Issued by Chinese Scholars (1995-2001)

	Title of the papers	Author and position	Issued
1	The Geographical Name for the Sea of Japan in Chinese Historical Documents	Wu Songdi 吳松弟 The Institute of Chinese Geography in Fudan University, Shanghai	1995, Seoul
2	Our View on the Origin for the Geographical Name of the Sea of Japan (East Sea)	Chen Cai and An Husen 陳才, 安虎森 Northeast Normal University, Changchun	1995, Seoul
3	Nationalities in the Eastern Part of Northeast China in History and Changes in the Name of the Sea of Japan	Xi Guojin 奚國金 The Institute of Geography, the Chinese Academy of Sciences	1995, Seoul
4	Preliminary Study on the Name of Sea of Japan	Du Xiangming 杜祥明 Research Institute of Topography, National Bureau of Surveying and Mapping, China	1996, Seoul
5	Our Opinion on the Geographical Name of the Sea of Japan (East Sea)	Yuan Shuren, Huang Yanjun 袁樹人, 黃岩君 Northeast Normal University, Changchun	1996, Seoul
6	Changes in Naming the Sea of Japan during Late-Qing Dynasty Period-A survey of Chinese Historical Documents	Zhu Shiguang 朱士光 The Research Institute for Chinese Historical Geography, Shanxi Teachers University	1997, Seoul
7	Problems on Origin and Standardization of name of "Japan Sea"	Yang Ningyi 楊寧一 Dept. of History, Beijing Normal University	1997, Seoul
8	The Geographical Name for the East Sea (Sea of Japan) in Old European and Japanese Maps	Song-di Wu 吳松弟 The Institute of Chinese Geography in Fudan University, Shanghai	1998, Seoul
9	Name for the Eastern Sea of Korea Peninsula, by Chinese Ancient Works	Han Maoli 韓茂莉 The Institute of Historic Geography, Beijing University	1999, Seoul
10	The Background and Significance of Renaming the Sea of Japan by Chinese Academia in 1940's	Sun Donghu 孫冬虎 Chinese Academy of Surveying and Mapping	1999, Seoul
11	Eastern Sea Area of Korea Peninsula should Resume the Original Name: Donghai, Orient Sea	Gu Renhe 顧人和 Nanjing Institute of Geography, Academia Sinica	2001, Seoul

Table 3 Some References in Chinese Ancient Literatures

Period	Sea Name	Literatures
B.C 480-222 Warring States	East Sea	<i>The Classic of the Mountains and Rivers</i> (山海經)

(戰國時期)		
-10 A.D, Before Tang Dynasty (唐朝以前)	Sea or ocean	<i>History of the Latter Han Dynasty</i> (後漢書) <i>Records of the Three Kingdom</i> (三國志) <i>Chronicles of the Jin Dynasty</i> (晉書) <i>Administrative Statues of the Tang Dynasty</i> (唐會要) <i>The examination of Islands surrounding Kuye</i> (庫葉列島考) <i>The New Chronicles of the Tang Dynasty</i> (新唐書) (朔方備乘), (續史方輿紀要)
A.D 10-12 Liao and Northern Song Dynasty (遼, 北宋時期)	East Sea	<i>Geographic Annals of Liao Dynasty</i> (遼史地理誌) <i>Compilation of Materials on the Northern Alliances of the Three Courts</i> (三朝北盟會編) <i>Geographic Annals of Yuan Dynasty</i> (元史地理誌) <i>Illustrated Records of Maritime Nations</i> (海國圖志) <i>Atlas of Chinese History</i> (中國歷史地圖集) (乘輅錄)
A.D 13-17 Yuan and Ming Dynasty (元, 明時期)	Whale Sea	<i>The Records of First Emperor of Ming Dynasty</i> (明太祖實錄) <i>The Unification History of Yuan Dynasty</i> (元一統志) <i>Records All over China</i> (環宇通志) <i>The Boundary of Manchuria in Yuan Dynasty</i> (元代滿洲疆域) <i>Atlas of Chinese History</i> (中國歷史地圖集) <i>University Atlas of World History</i> (大學世界歷史地圖集) <i>Atlas of Chinese Ancient History</i> (中國古代史地圖)
About A.D 17-19 Qing Dynasty (清代時期)	North part of the sea: East Sea. South part of the sea: Southern Sea	<i>Records of Dynasty-founding</i> (開國龍興記) <i>The Annals of the Capital</i> (盛京通志) <i>Records of Three Surnames</i> (三姓志) <i>Records of Korea</i> (朝鮮與地說) <i>Famous Sites in East State</i> (東國名勝記) <i>Illustrated Records of Maritime Nations</i> (海國圖志) <i>A Travel Note in Jilin</i> (吉林外記) <i>Atlas of Chinese History</i> (中國歷史地圖集) <i>Atlas of Chinese Ancient History</i> (中國古代史地圖) (小方壺齊與地叢紗), (取悉事爾始末記)
Since the end of 19 th Century (19 世紀末以後)	Sea of Japan	<i>A Collection of Chinese and Foreign Maps</i> (中外地輿圖說集成) <i>Records of Kuye Island</i> (庫葉島志略) <i>A New Atlas of Republic of China</i> (中華民國新地圖) <i>Map of Sea and Island in Southeast Sea</i> (東南海島圖經) <i>Examination for Russian Sea Route</i> (俄羅斯水道考) <i>The History of Japan</i> (日本國志)